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COMMENT

Questioning the "Sanctity" of long-term defense planning as practiced in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT

It is an article of faith amongst many defense officials that long-term defense planning constitutes the gold standard in the development and management of modern armed forces. That such a method has become central to the U.S. and other countries' defense planning systems it is surprising that there is so little questioning of its contemporary relevance, let alone an understanding of its provenance, original intent, and its highly nuanced nature. Rather, what one finds on closer examination of long-term defense planning methods is that they have contributed to producing sub-optimal defense plans. In order to provide greater clarity and understanding of the utility of long-term defense plans, this essay argues that as a key element of PPBS, this planning method has been a failure when measured against the ability of defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe to produce viable defense plans. To produce cost-informed and implementable defense plans, these defense institutions need to return to the original intend of this planning tool: to inform officials of long-term financial obligations and to enable informed decision-making to fund the current force.

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It is an article of faith amongst many defense officials that long-term defense planning constitutes the gold standard in the development and management of modern armed forces. In the case of the U.S. Department of Defense this is manifested in the Future Year Defense Program (FYDP). Indeed, one is schooled in its inviolate nature: staff and war college graduates will "fondly" recall briefings on the "rolling donuts" representing circles of the intersection of planning, programming, and acquisition. Likewise, authoritative sources simply assert that long-term defense planning is a critical and needed element of modern defense planning. To wit: "Long term planning (LTP) is essential to organisations facing the combined impact of uncertainty of the future and little flexibility with regards to resource employment" (NATO 2003, p. iii). As an essential aspect of programming within the U.S. Department of Defense (i.e. the

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Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution system – PPBE; often named PPBS where it has been adopted by other defense institutions), it is seen as being managed by the high priests of programming, and heretical questioning of the programming liturgy is simply not countenanced. Indeed, the method of PPBE (and its assumption of the necessity of long-term planning) has been exported abroad, notably to former communist states in Central and Eastern Europe (Vance and Hinkle 2010, pp. B-1 thru B5). With the encouragement of NATO nations and the International Staff, these countries have followed U.S. practices and, *inter alia*, dutifully develop long-term defense plans, albeit not as ambitious as their American counterparts' military departments, e.g. the U. S. Navy's Thirty-year Ship Building Plan (O'Rourke 2017).

That such a method has become central to the U.S. and other countries' defense planning systems it is surprising that there is so little questioning of its contemporary relevance, let alone a broader understanding of its provenance, original intent, and its highly nuanced nature. This is not even to address how relevant such a concept can be in the contemporary fluid security environment, not to mention how this planning process can address in a timely fashion disruptive technological innovation. Rather, what one finds on closer examination of long-term defense planning methods is that they have contributed to producing sub-optimal defense plans which are rarely executed. All the while this process is typically managed by its proponents in a needlessly highly complex manner which obviates against planning clarity and transparency, e.g. '[Long-term defense planning] is a complicated process fraught with significant and perhaps dire consequences for nations' (NATO 2003, p. 1). Indeed, arguably in its worst manifestations when it is employed as an essential element of PPBS, it contributes to isolating policy priorities from financial execution (Young 2016b).

This essay constitutes a continuation of a series of writings by the current writer that endeavours to analyze the utility of the PPBS in the context of defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. This particular work will assess the utility of long-term defense planning in its current usage and within its proper context as constituting one of the key assumptions of PPBS. As such, this essay is organized accordingly. First, it is important for planners and analysts to know the unique historical provenance and institutional context of the assertion that long-term planning is essential to producing viable defense plans, e.g. 'To deal with an increasingly complex security environment producing disparate competing demands, decision-makers need increasingly sophisticated support in the LTDP [long-term defense planning] process' (NATO 2003, p. iii). Critically related to this question is to understand the exceptional *American* historical and lingering contemporary institutional context behind the unquestioning need for long-term defense planning. Second, it is essential to analyze how this concept has been adopted and implemented in both the United States, as well as Central and Eastern Europe. The result of this review demonstrates that the method of long-term defense planning is plagued with muddled concepts and imprecisions in nomenclature, all of which has led to confusion and continues to impedethe development of viable defense plans. Third, it is necessary to enquire whether this method has been shown actually to *work*. Despite its wide-spread use, particularly for instance amongst "new" members of NATO, it is difficult to find many instances (despite a plethora of documents) of cases where these plans have ever been actually implemented as intended. Fourth, the essay will examine in light of the foregoing analysis whether there is any demonstrable utility

for defense institutions to adopt long-term defense planning methods. Fifth, the conclusion will include recommendations to aid defense official and planners gain greater clarity of defense planning and how certain aspects of long-planning can be re-conceptualized to be utilized to greater benefit and utility. At the heart of these recommendations is the need for officials to return to the original intention for creating long-term defense plans and redoubling their efforts to created costed priorities that are essential to *drive* effective defense planning, and forego the illusion that somehow long-term defense planning can ever provide a solution to the reality of budgeting uncertainty.

Origins of modern long-term defense planning

The origins of modern, formal long-term defense planning arguably can be traced to the introduction of the process in the U.S. Department of Defense in the early years of the Kennedy Administration when the president gave the task to his Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, to bring greater unity of effort to the sprawling and uncoordinated department. A key starting point was the appointment of Charles Hitch as Assistant Secretary of Defense (Comptroller). Hitch, along with Roland N. McKean, were the authors of a well-regarded work, published in 1960, that took the then novel approach of looking at defense planning as an economic, vice solely a military, challenge (Hitch and McKean 1960, p. 105). In other words, they endeavoured to conceptualize the challenge of defense planning as an economic problem, which needed to be solved through the efficient allocation of resources and reconciling conflicting views amongst organizations. In what is arguably the most persuasive treatise on the programming method, Alain C. Enthoven and K. Wayne Smith; both of whom helped introduce programming to the U.S. Department of Defense, best identified the challenges facing the administration as it attempted to bring unity of effort amongst three independent military departments (i.e. departments of the army, navy, and air force):

> Perhaps the key reason for the limited usefulness of the defense budget was the fact that defense budgeting was, in effect, conceived as being largely unrelated to military strategy. The two were treated as almost independent activities. They were carried out by different people, at different times, with different terms of reference, and without a method for integrating their activities. The strategy and forces were thought to be essentially military matters, while the budget was thought to be mainly a civilian matter. Force planning was done for several years into the future, by military men, on a mission-oriented basis, by the Services with attempts at coordination by the JCS organization. Financial planning was done one year at a time, largely by civilians, in terms of object classes of expenditures such as personnel and procurement, through the Service and DoD Comptroller organizations. This gap between strategy and forces, on the one hand, and budgets, on the other, posed a serious obstacle to rational defense planning (Enthoven and Smith 2005, p. 13).

The situation in which the new administration found itself was unenviable. The seminal 1947 National Security Act, whilst creating the Department of Defense, in reality only merged loosely a 'confederation of the three military departments' and where the secretary of defense exercised only limited powers (Hitch 1967, p. 15). Until the early 1960s defense planning consisted of the secretary of defense dividing the defense budget amongst the three military departments, essentially leaving to these

organizations how to decide best to spend their respective budgets. This was the case, in large part, due to the Department of Defense's lack of management structures and techniques. This *de facto* budget-driven process predictably produced sub-optimization since the military departments recognized only their own priorities; and in consequence, jointness suffered (Hitch 1967, pp. 18, 23–4).

With a mandate from President Kennedy to bring greater coherence to defense, Secretary McNamara put the services on notice that he expected to see, *inter alia*, the full life-cycle costs of all new proposed acquisitions. It needs to be recalled that this was during a period of high peacetime defense expenditures, conscription, conventional modernization, as well as each service developing and attempting to field their own expensive nuclear delivery platforms (Hitch and McKean 1960, pp. 23–83). To create the planning and management methods to achieve these objectives, McNamara directed Hitch and his team to implement "programming" for Fiscal Year 1963, giving them only 6 months to accomplish this task (Enthoven and Smith 2005, pp. 27–9). The Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) created in 1962 was designed to give the department a single method to prepare its annual defense budget, as well as establishing guidance for *future* planning in the form of costed capability proposals. Yet, given limited time and fierce opposition from the military departments a little-known accord was agreed which has, in effect, obviated against achieving the objectives of programming. By this, Hitch obscuficated this critically important point when he later wrote, 'Thus, the SECDEF now has the tools he needs to take the initiative in the planning and direction of the entire defense effort on a truly unified basis' (Hitch 1967, p. 58). Yet the fact of the matter is that the new programming system left *untouched* the existing budget structure (and thereby ensuring the military department's continuing autonomy) and connecting planning to budgeting via the new programming structure (Hitch 1967, p. 30). In short, Hitch allowed to remain stand one of the key weaknesses in the planning system that predated programming as identified by Enthoven and Smith (2005, p. 13).

Recounting the above historical record is critical to understanding the origins of long-term defense planning as a basic tenet of PPBS because the military departments had to produce detailed financial projections for the fiscal year in which funds were being planned, plus the following four years for review by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. These data were compiled to constitute a five-year plan. This practice was further institutionalized in law (U.S) when Congress directed the Department of Defense to compile these figures and submit a five-year defense program, i.e. the FYDP (*U.S. Code*, Title 10, Subtitle A, Part I, Chapter 9 § 221), which is used by the Secretary of Defense to project expenditures and proposed budget requests.[1] The submission of the FYDP annually to Congress meets the requirements of this legislation (U.S. Government Accountability Office 2004, pp. 4–5).

To the credit of those officials who attempted to bring reform to the Department of Defense through creating greater unity of effort and to produce financial efficiencies, there are benefits to elements of assessing the full financial implications of decision-making. As one U.S. government report notes, "leading practices in capital decision-making include developing a long-term capital plan to guide implementation of organizational goals and objectives and help decision-makers establish priorities over the long term" (U.S. General Accounting Office 1998). All too often prior to the McNamara era, the long-term financial liabilities being assumed by the military departments

(and by extension, U.S. tax-payers), often went unacknowledged. This situation resulted in military planners being *freed* from having to consider the financial consequences of their plans, whereas budgeting planning which lives within the context of yearly budget-cycles, *had* to be accurate. Worse yet, as Hitch noted, this led to military requirements being represented in absolute terms, disconnected from its cost implications (Hitch 1967, pp. 25–6). Clearly, a solution to this conundrum needed to be found. As an element to bring greater understanding of the financial implications of defense plans, officials realized that planning in a one-year timeframe was simply too short at the national-level. What was needed by senior defense officials was an understanding not only of future financial obligations of proposed draft plans, but also an accurate data-base of past financial costs to create an informed perspective of trends. In consequence, the fifth pillar of PPBS comprised a plan for combining forces and their costs projected into the future to provide officials with financial data of their decisions. Yet importantly, the authors of PPBS claimed that their long-term plan was never envisaged to be inflexible. Rather it was seen as providing officials with a projection of the financial implications of past decisions and planning assumptions, all with the objective of providing needed financial context by which defense plans could be developed. It was envisaged that a long-term plan would encourage officials to be mindful that today's decisions have long-term financial implications and these needed to be factored into current and future-year plans. Once implemented the initiative would force services to provide accurate financial projections of decisions (i.e. full life-cycle costs). Portrayed in this light, the authors argued that a long-term defense plan would not bind future officials to past decision-making. Rather, they argued that it would provide officials in future years with *flexibility* to shift priorities as they would have a full appreciation of the potential financial consequences of a decision to change directions (Enthoven and Smith 2005, pp. 20, 44–5, 48, 50).

There are a number of salient implications from this brief recounting of the original intent of the U.S. Department of Defense's concept of long-term defense planning. First, it is important to acknowledge that long-term "planning"; that is to say, multi-year force and supporting financial planning, was seen as constituting an essential element of PPBS. Second, PPBS was designed explicitly to meet the then prevailing rigid bureaucratic structures and political realities within the U.S. government. Uniquely different from other Western ministries of defense, the U.S. Department of Defense remains a confederacy of independent organizations, and critically, each with their own jealously guarded budgetary *autonomy* and legally-defined institutional responsibilities and functions. As Haynes so presciently writes, "The process [PPBE] became the essential means by which the US military services protected their respective identities, preferred weapons systems, and relevance" (Haynes, 2013, p. 7). And, as the military departments' individual PPBE systems have evolved, they have succeeded in isolating administrations' policy priorities from financial execution precisely in a way unforeseen or intended by its originators, i.e. the inability of secretaries of defense to change quickly priorities. No better example of this fact can be seen in Secretary of Defense Robert Gates's battle against his own Department of Defense to procure mine-resistant, ambush-protected vehicles (MRAPs) during the war in Iraq. "The hidebound and unresponsive bureaucratic structure that the Defense Department uses to acquire equipment performs poorly in peacetime. As I saw, it did so horribly in wartime" (2014, p. 126).

Additionally, notwithstanding public "strategy" documents published by administrations, the development of major force programs via PPBE and which are enshrined in the FYDP, all are a result of the intention of successive Congresses that the military departments are to remain largely independent from the Office of the Secretary of Defense.[2] One does not find such similar bureaucratic structures and supporting political realities in Central and Eastern Europe; the situation is to the contrary as ministries of defense are firmly under the control of cabinet/councils of ministers and powerful ministries of finance. Establishing government financial priorities are greatly complicated in the case of coalition governments with many political parties: a political reality in many of these countries. Furthermore, many ministries of finance in Central and Eastern Europe, e.g. Slovakia (Simon 2004, p. 200) and Georgia (Akubardia 2010, pp. 31–2) have been reluctant to recognize the concept of programming as a legitimate financial management technique as it is perceived as constituting future financial obligations. Third, unless carefully managed and controlled; all of which is manpower-intensive, experience demonstrates that programming can devolve into "strategic budgeting" which has the effect of isolating endorsed policy and priorities from budgetary execution. Evidence of this reality can be found in numerous defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe (argued in Young 2017b), as well as in the case of the U.S. Department of the Navy (Young 2016c). Thus, if only at the conceptual level, it is clear that the conditions which produced PPBS and what has become known as the FYDP are unique and it is highly unlikely that any defense institution in Central and Eastern Europe would have developed such complex methods on their own. It is, therefore, a legitimate question to pose: why was this highly complicated, nuanced, and U.S.-centric methodology exported extensively to the region?

Conflated concepts and nomenclature and muddled thinking

A review of the historical antecedents of programming and the creation of long-term defense planning in the United States demonstrates that the creators of this methodology went to great lengths to try to bring order to an incoherent process by which the Department of Defense conducted what can only be described as disaggregated budgeting. Thus, whilst perhaps the "theory" was valid, its application and subsequent transmutations have proven that programming has not been successful. The record demonstrates that it has led to conditions whereby it has contributed to isolating policy from financial execution. Thus, it is instructive to compare the original intent of employing long-term planning with its current application and usage by defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe.

Most importantly, the creators of programming never intended the original five-year defense plan to be a rigid, unchangeable plan, which one sees all too often in Central and Eastern Europe, where the institutional memory of communist 5-year plans is inevitably still very strong in many countries. Rather, it was created to solve two problems in bringing coherence to defense planning in the Department of Defense. First, in advocating new acquisitions, the military departments often did not present the full costs of new equipment, i.e. their full life-cycle costs. Thus, it was not unusual that prospective procurements would be over budget. Second, in addition to insisting on accurate costings of defense, McNamara's officials insisted that the military departments

provide both the full cost of the procurement (which, in itself, proved to be challenging), as well as an eight-year projection of forces and a five-year projection of costs of associated personnel in all mission-oriented programs. This was judged as necessary to enable the Office of the Secretary of Defense to transition from one-year budgeting ceilings which were seen as being inappropriate for managing and financing large acquisitions over multiple years.

Critically, Enthoven and Smith argued that their long-term defense plan was never intended to obligate future governments to fund previous decisions. Rather than constituting an inflexible plan to be followed blindly and without question, it was envisaged to provide defense planners with a road-map of the costs to be used in creating future plans and programs. In fact, in its earliest versions, it did not appear as a plan, but rather as a series of force tables. Thus, the original purpose of long-term defense planning was seen as providing planners with a guide to understand future financial obligations associated with past decision-making. In fact, Enthoven and Smith argued that, in lieu of limiting the decision-making abilities of the Secretaries of Defense, a long-term defense plan would provide officials with needed *flexibility* to *change* directions as dictated by policy and events, given that it was known what the costs would be associated with alternative options (Enthoven and Smith 2005, pp. 48, 52–3).

The adoption of PPBS and other Western defense planning concepts in legacy defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe has faced two key challenges. First, there has been the practice by Western officials of an infelicitous usage of nomenclature which has led to confused thinking and understanding of how to plan using Western methods. One distraction to providing clarity has been the practice of conflating planning, programming, and acquisition as if they were one process; whereby history has demonstrated that the former activity is all too often ignored by programming bureaucracies, and the separation of these three activities provides the opportunity to solve the antagonism in the requirements and responsibilities of each one against the other two. To be sure, the decision to introduce a new capability into an armed force needs to be assessed holistically, particularly related to its full life-cycle costs. However, as the experience of the U.S. Department of the Navy has demonstrated, without continuous strong policy control (articulated with costed plans), there is a tendency for the process to devolve into "strategic budgeting", with a strong emphasis on funding existing platforms, vice weapon systems and new technologies.[3] All of these defense institutions for years following the end of the Cold War lacked empowered policy directorates. Absent a cadre of civilian defense experts with a deep knowledge of the Western concept of "policy", recommendations of general staffs have often gone unchallenged, and hence unrestrained by financial realities. The record of these defense institutions demonstrates that in many cases long-term defense plans are perceived as being synonymous with acquisition and procurement, as well as the plans being immutable, thereby restricting officials' ability to change priorities after they have been approved. Seemingly lost has been the logic that all aspects of the defense budget need to be relevant to delivering "defense". After all, if an existing capability is not needed on the modern battlefield, there is no military logic that could possibly dictate that it should remain in the order of battle. Yet all too often officials and analysts have twisted the purpose of these plans to argue that once approved, long-term defense plans cannot be changed and are unassailable later for review by policy, e.g. Ukraine (Young 2017a, pp. 76–7).

Second, in the context of Central and Eastern European defense institutions, the concept of long-term defense plans was inappropriately introduced and poorly adopted and has become in many cases a bureaucratic pathology that has served to inhibit the development of coherent defense planning. Evidently, the experts who exported PPBS were not fully aware of the conceptual basis of the post-communist environment in which they were operating. This environment, most of which still remains intact today, operates in a militarized setting, based on a high degree of centralized control, which still adheres to communist-inspired legacy military concepts, impervious to revision. At its heart, leggacy "military doctrine" (Donnelly 1988, pp. 106) remains part of many institutions' mental operating systems. Due to its highly coherent nature, it remains as an unstated "theology" over which the entire armed forces are subjected to the highest degree of centralized control imaginable. Complicating the adoption of Western defense concepts is both the pernicious character of legacy military concepts and the fact that they are antithetical to the former (Young 2016a). Other legacy planning assumptions include an obsession with procuring new platforms and systems in large number, as opposed to optimizing the current force, as well as a cost blindness to such realities as long-term financial liabilities, life-cycle costs, inflation, and the amortization of the current system. Finally, it should not be ignored that until recently these were societies which had been ruled and dominated by Soviet-inspired ubiquitous five-year plans (the first covering 1928–32), which were ruthlessly implemented and which had the effect of centralizing communist control over an entire economy and society: down to the very last person. The prevalence of "military doctrine"; which, indeed 25-years after the Cold War can still be "felt" throughout these armed forces (Young 2017a, pp. 16, 59), and the continued utilization of antithetical legacy planning concepts and assumptions, like the indisputable "plan", have all combined to forestall the adoption of Western defense concepts.

One can observe in official planning documents produced by defense institutions in the region, and indeed in the writings on the subject of long-term planning, widespread confusion and misunderstanding of the original intent of this method that has inhibited the development of viable (i.e. executable) defense plans. Long-term defense plans drafted in legacy-burdened ministries of defense and general staffs inevitably are premised on the problematic assumption that if an activity, formation, or platform is *in* the plan, it implies that it *will be* funded and therefore the plan will be executed. The best example of this fallacious thinking can be found in the troubled history of the series of Ukrainian *strategic bulletins* that have been produced with five-year regularity after extensive periods of analysis and study; none of the efforts have succeeded in tying these plans with the defense budget (Young 2017a, 76–7). As a result, they have all failed to provide any coherent direction to the armed forces, and once shown to be ineffectual, produce planning stasis, but without any negative consequences for any civilian or military officials, as responsibility is collectivized in almost all of these defense institutions (Young 2017c). By focusing on producing the "plan", officials have abjured what should be their first responsibility as planners: to make defense *fit* the existing budget. Examples can be found in such ministries of defense that present detailed force modernization and ambitious acquisition plans, but then explain how these objectives are financially impossible to achieve, e.g. Bulgaria (2015), or obsess over future growth in GDP and assume that economic growth will be translated directly into

a larger defense budget, e.g. Macedonia (2014, pp. 38–40). Indeed, a good indicator of whether a long-term defense plan was developed using legacy concepts is where they do not start with an understanding of financial realities. Often, "money", if it is discussed at all, is relegated to the end of the document and not addressed in a meaningful manner. One sees this lack of financial realism even in those defense institutions which some might consider to be quite developed by "Western" standards, e.g. Slovenia (Slovenia 2009, Katič 2016).

Contributing to these conceptual misunderstandings has been muddled thinking about long-term defense planning that can be found in the literature, limited as it is (e.g. Håkenstad and Larsen). A representative example is provided by Ball and Le Roux (2006, pp. 41, 23), "As already stated, strategic situations change rapidly whilst the building of defence capabilities and expertise takes time. All strategic defence planning must therefore take the long-term view". They proceed to advocate the development of medium-term expenditure frameworks that tie policies and objectives, improve transparency, focus on outputs, and increase "ownership" by sectorial ministries. Stojkovic and Dahl (2007, p. 11) have written the rare essay that attempts to define and explain the nature and advantages of long-term planning.

> The general purpose of LTDP [long-term defense plan] is to (re)consider the mission of the Defence and to establish realistic long term goals and objectives consistent with that mission, as well as to define strategies for their fulfilment. Also, LTDP will promote [sic] desirable development of the Defence and to avoid unwanted effects.

Long-term defense planning, they claim, encourages planners to consider contingencies and develop the means to address them, whilst also "providing insights into future risks". They go on to claim that long-term defense planning establishes a link to financial challenges; albeit on the latter point they do not explain how this is the case (Stojkovic and Dahl 2007, p. 11). Finally, a NATO handbook on long-term defense planning writes of the need 'to balance defence expenditures with assumptions about future defence budgets' (NATO 2003, p. 7).

All of these works, implicitly or otherwise, are attempting to provide planners with a solution to the central challenge that bedevils all defense planners: how can one predict future defense budgets, and build a viable defense plan within these parameters? Ball and Le Roux even claim that absent a governmental commitment to achieve certain expenditure levels, no meaningful planning or programming can take place (Ball and Le Roux 2006, 47). Yet, in the end, their understanding of the nature of planning and the realities of democratic defense governance are not supportive of their assertions. In short, these arguments are weak on four key points. First, they perpetuate the misunderstanding that long-term defense planning, by definition, must be linear and perforce static. As one NATO report states: "Given the significant period it takes to implement a new force structure, partly due to lengthy development and acquisition times, Long Term Defence Planning (LTDP) usually focuses ten to thirty years into the future" (NATO 2003, p. x). What they are advocating is that by creating these plans, planning will be more predictable and in the worst misunderstanding of them, are implicitly contracts between the defense institution and government and somehow will be funded; after all, in most countries long-term defense plans are enshrined in law. Second, as will be discussed below in the context of NATO policies regarding

PfP Partner countries, attempting to obtain from governments or ministries of finance assurances of future defense expenditure levels is simply a fool's errand, and dwelling on obtaining such assurances distracts from the most important task of a defense planner: executing the one responsibility that is the most powerful instrument that they possess: to produce *costed priorities*. Third, none of these works define long-term defense planning within its proper originating context as proving a critical tool for managing today's defense force, i.e. creating an understanding of future financial projection of current obligations. Unfortunately, they represent a common misunderstanding of the original nature of long-term defense planning in the limited literature, which can be observed in the many failures to implement long-term defense plans by defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe. Fourth, implicit in these arguments in favor of long-term defense planning is an implied assumption that they are successful in foretelling future requirements of the armed forces. Unfortunately, this is simply not the case as the "enemy" does have a vote. After all, if the U.S. FYDP constitutes a best practice, then one has the challenge of explaining why, for instance, it had not predicted the need for up-armoured vehicles (i.e. MRAPs) in Afghanistan and Iraq and that they had to be procured out-of-cycle.

Does long-term defense planning (actually) work? The case of Central and Eastern Europe

In order that the current writer not to be open to the charge of "navel gazing" over methodology at the expense of practicality, it is essential that the fundamental question of whether long-term defense planning has any proven *utility* needs to be addressed. As seen, notable analysts and NATO itself have argued the value of using this technique in producing defense outcomes. However, these arguments must be "tested" to actual defense planning situations to ascertain whether this technique actually delivers its intended outcome, i.e. do they create and maintain defense policy-determined defense capabilities? Indeed, one obscure report cited by Stojkovic and Dahl argues that many long-term plans are never fully implemented, or they prove to lack utility in cases of changing and unpredictable environments (The Voluntary Sector Knowledge Network 2007). Since it is hard to imagine what could be a more unpredictable environment than that which relates to defence, this reality suggests confirmation of LTDP's lack of utility for defense.

If one returns to the context of "new" NATO allies and PfP Partners with legacy heritage, it is the rare defense institution in the region which does not dutifully draft long-term defense plans with an almost religious-like expectation that these plans will be executed by the very "power" of having been approved. Traditionally, long-term defense plans had been envisaged to span a five-year timeframe; however, following the international financial crisis, with advice provided by Western nations and NATO International Staff, these plans now mirror NATO's ten-year planning cycle introduced in 2008 (Kordowski *et al.* n.d., p. 49) and in at least one country, the plan is twelve-years (Latvia), based on the PPBS-inspired assumption of a viable multi-year force and financial planning. Yet all the while that these defense institutions have been diligently developing long-term defense plans, they have all universally struggled to implement PPBS, failing to see this conceptual disconnect. There is now another trend which is to develop modern sounding and apparently NATO compatible, "capability plans".

However absent developing fully cost-informed plans (that include their long-term financial obligations) premised on a defense budget divided into thirds (i.e. personnel, operations and maintenance, and investment), these are likely to be just another long-term defense plan by another name, and equally ignored by governments and ministries of finance. In point of fact, the general norm in the region is that defense planning is largely conducted absent full costing data. For instance, as late as 2016, the Estonian defense institution *still* did not possess a methodology to provide estimated costs of generic capability options (Murumets 2016, p. 1). Another example can be seen by studying the past practices of the Polish defense institution. The general staff created the 'Army 2006′ modernization plan, which in the end proved to be neither politically, nor financially, supportable (Gogolewska 2006, p. 112). In recent years, Polish planning methods again failed in the case of the development of the ten-year technical modernization program launched in 2012. By the end of 2015, it was reported that this plan had not met its acquisition objectives due to the fact that the plan had not been properly *costed* (Paszewski 2016, pp. 126–7). One can only hope that the Polish government's 2017 defense review and recommended force structure (which was subjected to an extensive series of analytical studies and war games) is fully costed and therefore proves to be viable over time (Poland 2017, pp. 13, 62–5). As a result, as the current writer has argued in another forum, the record of defense planning amongst "new" NATO members, almost all of them are attempting to use programming and draft extensive long-term defense plans, is clearly one of abject failure (Young 2016b, pp. 68–77). Put another way, tabling the argument that not one of the countries have been able to produce a viable long-term defense plan that has been executed, one is challenged to cite a case (using objective data and not assertion) where one *has* been implemented as planned.[4]

When examining the defense planning methods employed by these countries, it is clear that the imported programming methodology has not performed to expectation. At worse, programming combines with national and organizational cultural norms, e.g. high power-distance (Hofstede 2011 and Hofstede *et al.* 2010) to isolate government-endorsed policy from financial execution. Left unaddressed is that the concept of "money" remains defined by these defense institutions in legacy terms as a given, and all existing problems would be solved if only there were *more* (often articulated in the context of an aspired certain percentage of GDP). For instance, this very line of argument is found in the 2010 Serbian Defense White Paper, which states authoritatively (and nonsensically) that to implement the methods provided by the International Monetary Fund (the precise source not being cited), defense requires at least 2 percent of GDP (Serbia 2010, pp. 128–9). This representative example illustrates that these defense institutions continue to struggle to adopt the basic concept that in a democracy existing finances must be optimized to produce defense outcomes and that ministries have no authority to dictate to parliaments their financial aspirations.

The final question of the utility of long-term defense planning relates to the method's ability successfully to effect planning continuity in periods of financial uncertainty and throughout periods of escalation. As to the former point, during the early years of this decade, the U.S. Congressional mandated sequestration of the federal budget under the terms of the Budget Control Act (which had the aim of reducing the federal government's deficit), stressed both the U.S. Departments of the Navy and Air Force's PPBE to the point

that they collapsed due uncertainty of their budgets (Young 2016c, pp. 942, 946). This experience alone suggests that programming as a method may well be only appropriate in financial environments where there is budgetary certainty and/or strategic stability, i.e. conditions which existed during the Cold War.[5]

Second, it must be judged as problematic that long-term defense planning methods are sufficiently robust to survive the stress that inevitably would befall policy officials and planners should a defense institution have to respond militarily amidst a state of escalation. By this, it is unclear; to say the least, that long-term defense planning methods have been explicitly designed with the objective of ensuring methodological *continuity* and functionality of planning in peace, tension, crisis, and war. If one accepts the Western concept that one prepares the defense institution with the objective of being able to conduct effective military operations under wartime conditions, logic therefore dictates that planning methods must be applicable throughout the *entire* spectrum of escalation. Whilst this point has not been widely discussed by officials or analysts, given the wide use of ineffectual programming and long-term defense plans by countries throughout the region, one is left with the suspicion that such considerations have not been fully understood by defense officials, or those foreign experts assisting in introducing PPBS, let alone addressed sufficiently. Therefore, one fears that existing programming methods, expressed in long-term defense plans in Central and Eastern Europe, as well as in the United States,[6] remain in idyllic isolation from confronting this reality. This precise methodological weakness can be witnessed very clearly in the case of the US PPBE which has proven itself impervious to being relevant during periods of war, notwithstanding Enthoven and Smith's lengthy, but unconvincing, argument related to the Vietnam war, to the contrary (2005, pp. 267–9). It is arguable that the U.S. Department of Defense has sufficiently robust institutional capability and enough money to enable it to maintain, in effect, two different planning systems; i.e. PPBE and Operations and Overseas Contingency funding (Williams and Epstein 2017), albeit this has not been without severe criticism by some influential members of Congress (Bender and Herb 2015). Yet, one would be imprudent to assume that any of these legacy defense institutions have such institutional planning and programming redundancy, let alone political support for such a solution. Instead, one suspects that in a case of escalation, existing programming and multi-year funding assumptions will be quickly jettisoned and less complex planning methods tied to operations would have to be quickly developed: if there is sufficient time.

Unfortunately, Western political officials and the NATO International Staff have not been able to develop a sharp and consistent message to convince defense officials in the region that their planning methods need to make "defense" fit the existing defense budget. For example, Partnership Goal General (PG) 0022 is defined as stable budget planning and has been adopted (alas) by too many PfP members' defense institutions (Boland 2014). The problem with encouraging ministries of finance to develop stable medium-term expenditure plans (three years) is that it has given ministries of defense false expectations of predictable budgeting into the future. Leaving aside that it is highly problematic that any parliament, or ministry of finance, would agree (let alone carry out) such a commitment; simply on the grounds of national sovereignty, the fact of the matter is that such assumptions have acted to encourage defense officials to accept the planning assumption of multi-year force and supporting financial planning without any

assurances that the funds will ever come to hand. This has enabled defense officials to avoid facing the all-too-often harsh reality that their current budget is too small in relation to the existing legacy mindset-driven force structure ambitions, and thus forcing the development of long over-due *costed* priorities. There is no shortage of examples of ambitious long-term defense plans, which sometimes are even endorsed by government and parliament, and which nevertheless remained underfunded, at which point they are innocently declared un-implementable, e.g. Slovenia (2010) and have produced institutional stasis. As a result of this prevailing conceptual miasma, planning, budgeting and financial management in all of these defense institutions, to varying degrees, remains isolated, and even in some cases impervious to the realities facing the rest of the organization.

Conclusion

The record of long-term defense planning in Central and Eastern European defense institutions is far from constituting a successful technique that ties defense policy priorities to financial execution. More specifically, long-term defense planning has encouraged defense officials to plan modernization far in the future without regard to financial realities, let alone addressing current defense needs *today*. But with minor exception, this "future" never arrives, whilst all the while ignoring the need to fund short-term operational requirements. In its worst manifestations in the region, the imported version of long-term defense planning embraces the US practice of reinforcing the autonomy of military planners as they create future year plans, 2 to 3 years in advance of the current budget year. Once developed, following U.S. practice it is not unusual that such plans are declared to be "baked" and immune from subsequent policy changes. This conceptual dissonance holds that multi-year force and supporting financial planning are expectations, whilst they should be more accurately described as constituting merely institutional aspirations at best, and manpower-intensive "science projects" in the worst cases. Moreover, in lieu of producing predictable defense outcomes, the use of programming and long-term defense plans has had the pernicious effect in many countries of facilitating the hyper-centralization of financial decision-making within ministries of defense, as opposed to being delegated to commanders who are responsible for producing capabilities. It is equally clear that programming and long-term defense plans have not been able to assist ministries of defense plan effectively during periods of financial uncertainty and budget cuts. Lastly, it must be assessed as problematic whether programming and particularly the use of long-term defense planning methods can support a defense institution to respond with military forces in a period of escalation, let alone during war.

Methodologically speaking, the original purpose of long-term defense plans has apparently been lost to, or never understood by, many defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe, just it has subsequently evolved in the case of the U.S. Department of Defense's FYDP. As this essay has demonstrated by reviewing the origins of long-term defense planning, it was initially envisaged to enhance policy flexibility and not inhibit it. As programming has proven itself difficult to implement in these countries, considerable effort has been placed on the all but forlorn hope that developing long-term defense plans would provide *he* silver bullet to produce predictable and perhaps

even greater defense expenditures. Yet, an inability in the case of many of these countries to cost properly the existing force, let alone to define capabilities in terms of their life-cycle costs, has made these "plans" little more than dreams generating unsubstantiated, and thus harmful expectations.

The solution to this conundrum facing defense planners in the region is the need to review comprehensively the role of "policy" in developing priorities. Fundamentally, in essentially all of these countries, bureaucratic powers need to be rebalanced to reinforce the authority and scope of responsibilities of defense policy directorates. The empowerment of policy directorates to develop and oversee the execution of policy priorities will enable these defense institutions to escape the current planning trap in which they find themselves: developing long-term defense plans which are almost always not costed and therefore not executable at the expense of creating viable defense options that can aligned with their contemporary security environment. As such, PPBS directorates, many of which have been incapable of carrying out something as basic as costing the current force or even acquisitions (i.e. using life-cycle costing) need to be dismantled as independent directorates. Policy directorates need to be reinforced to include a defense planning branch where planning does not currently already fall under policy, as well as another branch responsible for managing finances. All proposed plans must be costed by the planning branch (ergo, they must "own" cost models) and only once that they have been approved by policy will the financial branch manage execution, to include maintaining a full appreciation of all future financial obligations. On this very point, it is regrettable to note that the recent reorganization of the Hungarian Ministry of Defense has shuttered its planning branch and merged it with the Department of Economic Planning and which stands in direct contradiction to the findings and recommendations of this paper (A honvédelmi miniszter 33/2017).

Such reforms will return the function of long-term defense planning to its original purpose of providing officials with a data-base of projected costs associated with the current and planned force, as opposed to limiting their ability to shift priorities. In fact, the utility of these financial projections should be judged by how much *flexibility* they can provide ministers and senior defense officials to change the way money is being spent to produce relevant defense outcomes. Critically, plans may well be approved that extend financial obligations into the future, but this in no way implies that current or future year plans are in any way "baked" and isolated from the policy directorate, and hence from the operating defence and security environment. These organizational reforms will link costed policy priorities closer to financial execution, and will enable the policy directorate to make changes quickly to respond to the operational requirements of the armed forces.

These recommendations will prove themselves challenging to adopt and fully implement as they must be accompanied by the thorough retirement of the existing conceptual logic of long-term defense planning and replaced by one that empowers policy directorates to determine where and *when* the defense budget is to be spent. Therefore, it can be expected that bureaucracies will be seriously unsettled, which should be of concern in that many of Central and East European defense institutions remain in various phases of development and sophistication. But, the one commonality that they do share is an inability to produce and execute viable defense plans, all the while their armed forces slowly rust away. As such, senior political officials in

these countries must take responsibility to ensure that these reforms are fully implemented: institutional self-evaluations (i.e. "grading one's own homework") needs to be rejected to ensure that these deep reforms are appropriately prescribed and fully executed. And all of which needs to be executed against a backdrop of immediacy as the other commonality they share is to prepare their armed forces to respond, if necessary, to an aggressive Russia which has militarized its policy towards the West and new democracies in Central and Eastern Europe (Sherr 2017).

Notes

1. U.S. legislation requires the FYDP covers the fiscal year with respect to which the budget is submitted and at least the four succeeding fiscal years. For each fiscal year of the period in question, it must also include estimated expenditures and the proposed appropriations, as well as for procurement of equipment, military construction for the reserve components of the armed forces. U.S. Code 10 § 10,543 (2004).
2. Another weakness in the development of PPBS was the blind and uncritical acceptance by Hitch of the Joint Staff's annual Joint Strategic Objectives Plan (JSOP) which was used to initiate the programming process. Hitch writes of his acceptance of the valid initiation starting point by the JSOP as the it initiates PPBS; whereas with the benefit of additional years of experience of implementing PPBS, Einhoven and Smith excoriate the document. They write that it was solely a wish-list of the military departments, way over budgetary projections, and the Joint Staff consistently failed to force the Military Departments to find efficiencies and produce great jointness. *Cf.*, (Hitch 1967), p. 31 and (Enthoven and Smith 2005), pp. 94–5.
3. See then-Secretary of Defense Ashton Carter's letter critical of navy priorities to then-Secretary of the Navy Ray Maybus, 14 December 2015 (Maucione 2015).
4. In this respect, it is instructive to compare the two Croatian long-term defense plans, 2006 and 2013 where the latter actually advocated the need for defense cuts if the defense institution were to be able to meet policy objectives: honesty in policy planning that is almost unheard of in defense planning documents found in the region. (*Cf.*, Croatia 2006), with (Croatia 2013).
5. This point would underscore the argument made by the influential Henry Mintzberg who writes that the development and adoption of PPBS constitutes one of the greatest efforts and failures of all time in public finance (1994, p. 19).
6. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates complained that the Department of Defense was reluctant to meet a current battlefield requirement with purchasing MRAPs as it was seen as being at the expense of long-term procurement programs. In the end, the vehicles were purchased outside of the normal services' budgets averting a bureaucratic "blood bath", which should be seen as constituting a salient lesson for defense institutions in Central and Eastern Europe (Gates 2014, p. 121).

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